

The Early Percussion Music of John Cage, 1935–1943

by Michael Williams

AUTHOR'S PREFACE:

The following interview was conducted on the morning of June 6, 1988. I had been gathering research information for my doctoral dissertation on Mr. Cage's early percussion music¹ and needed to clarify some technical and historical points with the composer. Jack Stamp and I visited with Mr. Cage for about two hours that summer morning. We were struck by his openness and warmth, and his graciousness in answering questions about music he had written fifty or more years ago. We found in Mr. Cage's responses a profound respect for percussion music and an unwavering belief in the integrity of our art form, as well as a delightful sense of humor. The percussion world will miss John Cage. May the spirit of his creative work live on.

JOHN CAGE INTERVIEW

6/6/88

MICHAEL WILLIAMS: Was the *Quartet* that you wrote for film-maker Oscar Fischinger in 1935 the first effort in percussion?

JOHN CAGE: (long pause) I'm not sure whether it was or whether the *Trio* was. The reason I paused so much is because my tendency was to start with lower numbers and go to higher numbers, and the *Trio* requires three players, whereas the *Quartet* is four. And I wrote, for instance, apart from percussion, a piece for clarinet, then I wrote a piece for two voices, and so I had a tendency to start with lower numbers and go to higher numbers. So that would make the *Trio* first. I think it may have been first.

WILLIAMS: And the *Trio* was for wood sounds?

CAGE: Nothing was really for anything. They were notes. It was an effort in composition. Then I lived in Santa Monica in a house that was devoted during the day to bookbinding, and in the evening to making music. And some of the people who played in the percussion group had experience as modern dancers. And what we did

then was to experiment with pieces of junk and with a few rented instruments. I rented a timpani and some gongs and cymbals and so forth, but a lot of the instruments were things like brake drums and things from the kitchen, et cetera.

WILLIAMS: Now, this was after the piece you wrote for Fischinger?

CAGE: I didn't really write anything for Fischinger; it was a project to write something. He was using the Brahms Hungarian Dances, and we were introduced with the suggestion that his work could improve if he had modern music. And he made that statement that everything has a spirit, and that you could release it by setting it into vibration, and so this inspired me to hit and scrape and do everything I could to all these things. So, the *Trio* and the *Quartet* were both written without instruments in mind. We experimented, with my help, and with the player's help, to find out what would happen when we did one thing or another. And I've let that continue in the presentation of the *Quartet*, whereas the *Trio*, I've orchestrated, so to speak.

WILLIAMS: In the *Quartet*, did you have the idea that it was to be one sound per person or was it to be many sounds?

CAGE: There are no instruments specified, so it could be any number of instruments, and it often is. I think it's interesting to see what people do with it. The group in Cincinnati make a very interesting performance of it, using a prepared piano to give two parts to one player because they only had three. I asked, "How can you perform a quartet with three players?" They said, "You'll see." So, it was with right and left hand, you see, on the piano.

WILLIAMS: What about at the Cornish School? Was that where you really started working with the dance?

CAGE: No, I had worked with the dance before at UCLA with Martha Deane, and then I was married, and (my

wife) Xenia and I were living in the same apartment house as my mother and father. I wanted to get a situation where we had our own lives, so to speak, rather than being close to my mother and father. Not that either one of us disliked them, but we wanted to build our own lives, so to speak. So, I went to San Francisco, and I had had enough experience with dance so that I applied for work, and I got five jobs in one day. I took the one that ended up in Seattle because there was a closet there with three hundred percussion instruments in it, I think, left by one of the German modern dancers who had come to Seattle. Maybe three hundred is a wrong number, because that was the number of instruments that I finally had in my own collection. I would say it was probably some other number, but it was a closet full of instruments that attracted me. At that time, I was going to every store I could think of to buy things whenever I had any money.

WILLIAMS: And you organized the first percussion ensemble there?

CAGE: Yes, and I made tours of Montana, Idaho, Oregon, and I wrote to people all over, including Mexico (to Chavez) asking for pieces.

WILLIAMS: This was apparently very successful.

CAGE: It was quite successful. There were some people who didn't respond with pieces, or like Chavez, who responded with pieces that we couldn't play because we couldn't roll! (laughter) Virgil Thompson, for instance, didn't reply. When I met him years later, my letter to him was still on his desk, unanswered. Another person who didn't reply was John Becker, whose music I heard recently in a retrospective. It could have been interesting. His work was interesting. The person who interested me the most was William Russell.

WILLIAMS: And you played a lot of his work.

CAGE: Well, I literally,...I was his dentist, so to speak. I pulled his teeth out! (laughter) I pulled the music out of him. He would not have written it if I hadn't literally insisted. One piece had been published before, which I was aware of, and so I knew the quality of his work. That was the *Three Dance Movements*. I may be wrong, but I think he wrote the *March Suite* for me, and the *Cuban Sketches* (*Studies in Cuban Rhythms*, 1939) and the *Chicago Sketches*. I'm now trying to get all that work published at Peters. I don't think I've been successful, yet, but if I haven't I'm going to plug along at it, because I think it's brilliant work.

WILLIAMS: You gave a performance at the University of Chicago within an orchestra concert featuring works by Dvorak and others. There must have been some interest, some popularity for your work, to allow you to make a contribution to that performance.

CAGE: Right, but that didn't mean it was popular for the audience. I'm sure they much preferred the Dvorak. If they happened to like the percussion, they thought of it as a novelty.

WILLIAMS: Is that still the case today?

CAGE: Well, less so. I think you could give a percussion concert and get a very large audience today, and most of the people would be there because they were interested in the music, and there wouldn't have to be any Dvorak. Or you could use it as I do in *Credo in US*.

WILLIAMS: Right. My percussion ensemble performed *Credo in US*.

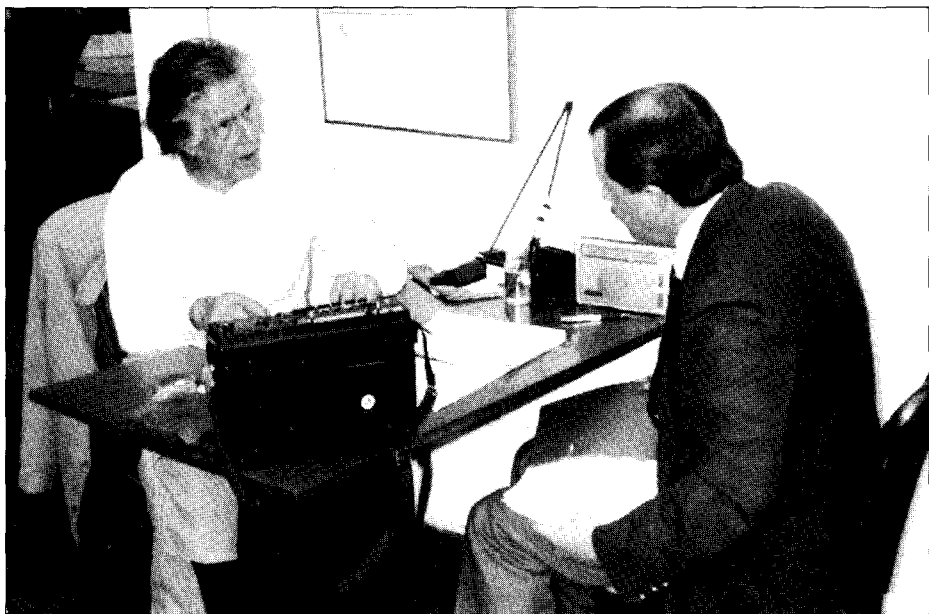
CAGE: With Dvorak?

WILLIAMS: Yes.

CAGE: I like it best with the *New World Symphony*.

WILLIAMS: Jack made the statement on the way up here that, in that piece, it's the symphony that is the "noise" that interrupts the music, so to speak. It's the irritant.

CAGE: Right. And there's something



John Cage discusses his early percussion music with Michael Williams (NYC, 1988).

wrong with the way I've notated it, I think. The result is that performances are very different, one from another, and I'm sure each group works very hard and faithfully to do it the way he thinks it should be done. So, there's something peculiar about my notation that brings about a variety of responses. I think the same thing is true of the *Third Construction*. It's kind of indefinite. In the *Third Construction* it's the dynamics. There is a good deal of variety from one performance to another, and yet they're all interesting. The same thing is true of *Credo in US*.

WILLIAMS: In *Credo*, you call at the beginning for radio or phonograph, and at every other appearance, it just says radio.

CAGE: Every other one?

WILLIAMS: Yes, as far as I know.

CAGE: There are a lot of people who give it kind of an ABA effect by using the radio in the middle and the record at the beginning and again at the end. I think it's nice that people make up their own versions. I should make a note that it can be one or the other (radio or phonograph).^{*} If the tempo is taken not too fast, then you get a chance to hear the radio. Sometimes

they play it very fast. There's also a tendency to play the *Third construction* very rapidly, whereas my really fast pieces for prepared piano, like the *Book of Music* and the *Three Dances*, which should be fast, are very rarely played fast, or as fast as they should be.

WILLIAMS: Lou Harrison gave a concert in San Francisco in 1942. On the program it says "Fourth Construction."

CAGE: It does?

WILLIAMS: Yes, I can show it to you. The review of the concert describes a piece that sounds like *Imaginary Landscape No. 2*.

CAGE: That's what happened. Instead of writing a fourth *Construction*, which Lou may have announced, I actually wrote another *Landscape*.

WILLIAMS: Well, I thought it was interesting. I had never heard of a "Fourth Construction."

CAGE: Nor have I!

WILLIAMS: Did Lou Harrison assume that it was going to be a fourth *Construction*?

CAGE: Oh, I probably said I would do that, but then he didn't play that. It was the *Landscape*.

WILLIAMS: Let me read something that

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came from the *New York Times* review of the concert you gave at the Museum of Modern Art in 1943. I'd like to get your reaction to this:

"When one considers the highly developed art of the percussion orchestra, or gamelans of Java and Bali, the offerings on this program seem inexplicably childish and tame...When one thinks of the fascinating combinations of percussion instruments and the skilled use made of them by such composers as Rimsky-Korsakov, Bartok or Stravinsky in their creations when judged merely as percussion sound apart from the rest of the musical context, the composition heard last night had next to nothing to commend them, despite the care lavished on them by the participants."

What was, or is, your reaction to this statement?

CAGE: Well, that's just a criticism that's stupid and insensitive. Time, so to speak, is proving such critics wrong, because the pieces are interesting and they were interesting to the composers at the beginning, and now they're interesting to critics, even. Critics can't hear anything, really. They have all their ideas in their heads, in such a way that they stop up their ears and they're unable to think.

WILLIAMS: How did the public receive these works here in New York City?

CAGE: Everybody loved it, except, of course, the critics.

WILLIAMS: Let me read what someone said of Merce Cunningham's solo recital in 1944, for which you composed the music, and several of the percussion works appeared there:

"Mr. Cage accompanied the six dances on prepared piano, and his compositions for them were perfect as dance accompaniment. His music, like Mr. Cunningham's dancing, has an effect of extreme elegance in isolation."

CAGE: This is Edwin Denby. He was a poet. He wasn't really a critic.

WILLIAMS: So, the dance community embraced your work?

CAGE: Oh, yes.

WILLIAMS: Whereas the musical community was skeptical.

CAGE: Right, and it was the artists and the dancers who accepted my work, rather than the critics and the musical community. When I applied for a job in the W. P. A. in the music department, they said, "You're not a musician," so, I went to the recreation department. My teacher, Schoenberg, said that I was his most interesting pupil, but that I was not a composer, but an inventor.

WILLIAMS: Of genius, though!

CAGE: Well, that's just his language.

WILLIAMS: It seems that the Museum of Modern Art concert was the peak of your early work in percussion, and after that you devoted yourself to the prepared piano. Was there a reason for a shift here?

CAGE: Yes. In New York it was impossible to get a group of people together to work. It was next to impossible to have rehearsals. There was no place to put the instruments. I finally gave them away. I gave them to Paul Price. I have next to nothing now. I have a few things. Now and then I'll have a few things made. I had nine clay drums made, which are being used now in Berlin for Merce's next dance concert, and I have a Japanese bell. I had a beautiful tam-tam at one point which was stolen, I think, either by one of the percussion renting companies or by one of their clients. It was a beautiful gong and there was no reason for it to not be returned to me, except that it was taken.

WILLIAMS: Was it a large instrument?

CAGE: Oh, yes. It was a big, beautiful tam-tam. Lou (Harrison) and I each had a big tam-tam, and together they were magnificent, the pitch relation.

WILLIAMS: In the *First Construction*, you call for oxen bells and suggest as a possible substitution that one could use Balinese button gongs. Lou Harrison has said that he prefers a dry sound associated with oxen bells. Are you looking for a more ringing sound?

CAGE: The reason Schoenberg said that I wasn't a composer was that I don't hear music in my head, so when you

say "were you looking for something," I have to say I wasn't looking for anything. I was writing something in order to hear something that I'd not yet heard. So, I have no ordinary composer's ear. I don't hear anything in my head.

WILLIAMS: So the composing and the listening are two different things.

CAGE: Very much!

WILLIAMS: In the *First Construction*, each player supposedly accumulates sixteen sounds.

CAGE: That's the idea.

WILLIAMS: I've tried to count them...

CAGE: And it doesn't work out.

WILLIAMS: Right!

CAGE: That's because we didn't have that number. It would have been right, compositionally, for there to be sixteen, it seemed to me, but we couldn't have sixteen because there weren't sixteen in one case, I think. There were only three temple gongs, and I couldn't get another one.

WILLIAMS: There were also to be sixteen motives presented in the work.

CAGE: Yes. I tended to put those motives in circles and permit them to go around a circle and not to cross the circle, an idea that came from twelve-tone music. But, the important thing here is not so much *that* as it is the rhythmic structure. The rhythmic structure is defined by measures. This is 4, 3, 2, 3 and 4 measures, and that is why I wanted sixteen of everything.

WILLIAMS: It seems to me that timbre or coloration or orchestration tends to define the smaller sections of the rhythmic structure.

CAGE: Yes, that's true, Schoenberg taught, not with rhythmic structure, but with harmonic structure, that you could be more complicated as you went on. I don't know that *I* was complicated. I think I remained rather simple.

WILLIAMS: You have made the comment that this structural concept of the square root formula allows the sounds to be themselves. Can you explain how this is possible?

CAGE: In a tonality structure, sounds

can't be themselves because they are in a structure where their pitch is necessary to the structure, so they are fulfilling the laws, so to speak. But the law in a rhythmic structure doesn't have anything to do with the sounds. It has to do with the time or the silence, so that any sound can be itself in such a structure, and there is no indication that it is either following or not following the law except about where it is put, but where it is put doesn't change its nature. So, sounds are themselves, whereas in Dvorak, for instance, no sound is itself. They are all fulfilling the tonal structure of the piece. They are busy *not* being themselves. I guess that is why so many western composers have been willing to write, so to speak, the same piece over and over again, since they think that it's not something that you hear, but something that you construct out of harmony, you see. That

allows the African who comes to hear a concert of western music to ask, "Why did they play the same piece all the time?" And it's true! I was just in Leningrad and there was music from all over the world for orchestra. A lot of it was very conventional, and really you couldn't distinguish one piece from another. Some of the music was just awful, and it was awful because of European theory, not because of anything else.

WILLIAMS: You obviously rejected European theory early on, and I see it as a connection through your tendency to tap everything.

CAGE: Right. I am essentially a percussion composer.

Jack Stamp: Do you think that was an outgrowth of Schoenberg's effort to eliminate tonality?

CAGE: Well, he made it clear to me, and I made it clear to him, that I had no feeling for harmony. So, he said to

me, "You won't be able to write music." So I figured out a music, namely percussion music, that I *could* write with the rhythmic structure.

WILLIAMS: So you took the Schoenbergian concept a step further, and emancipated the noise, so to speak.

CAGE: That's what Peter Yates said. There is now a very interesting explanation of some of my ideas by James Pritchard.² They don't so much have to do with percussion, but with my use of chance operations and indeterminacy. He has discovered things that even I wasn't aware of. For instance, the first use of the I Ching, he found, was in the *Concerto for Prepared Piano and Chamber Orchestra* in the third movement.

WILLIAMS: And you were not aware of this?

CAGE: No, I had thought I first used it in the *Music of Changes*.

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WILLIAMS: In many of your percussion works, you make use of the quintuplet or the septuplet figure, whether within the bar or across the bar. Was there something about these rhythmic figures that you thought was significant?

CAGE: Yes. It came from my studies with Henry Cowell, and it was characteristic of Indian music, not of the South, but influenced by Mohammedan music. Mohammedan rhythms were to me more interesting than the South Indian rhythms. They were interesting because of these grupettos. Henry, himself, was very interested in grupettos, and devised notation for them which I didn't use. I copied out his book on rhythm, which was not published, and this book had all the information that led to my use of these grupettos.

WILLIAMS: Did you have any difficulty teaching these rhythms to your performers?

CAGE: No. That was why we thought we had the right to give concerts, even though we couldn't roll!

WILLIAMS: You said that the square root formula was related to the Indian tala, with the exception that it has a beginning and an ending. Is this related to your studies with Cowell, also?

CAGE: No. That is just a reflection I had after learning more about Indian music. I naturally made a structure out of it, coming as I did from European thinking, with a beginning, middle, and an end, but as I left structure and went toward process, then I grew closer to Oriental thinking, which doesn't have to have structure. Now, I have the impression that I am working with several parts, but I no longer have a score. Each part has its division into parts, and this was already true of the *Third Construction*, in that two parts don't have the same structure, but have a different one. I like that independence.

WILLIAMS: *Amores* and *She Is Asleep*, both were written in the same year and both include prepared piano and percussion in separate movements. Would you consider these to be important

transitional works, from the percussion to the prepared piano?

CAGE: I had the notion of writing a long work which would fill out a large rhythmic structure and which began with those pieces you mentioned; *She Is Asleep* (the quartet for drums), and then the piece for prepared piano and voice (another movement of the same work), then the third piece was a piano piece called *A Room*. It was, in general, about woman, hence *She Is Asleep*. The work was never finished, and it was to be followed by another work which would have to do with maleness. Instead of finishing that work, I put those ideas in *A Book of Music* for two pianos.

WILLIAMS: Robert Dunn has said that *Amores* represents an attempt to express the combination of the erotic and the tranquil, two of the permanent emotions of Indian tradition. Could you explain this further? How is this realized?

CAGE: It is just realized as far as one's intentions go, which often fail for anyone but the person who has the intention! I remember that somewhere I've written the story that I'd written *The Perilous Night*, thinking that it was a somewhat anguished piece, and that it was intensified by the separation of the two voices at the end. But, there were many people who found it laughable, and one of them was a critic who said it was like a woodpecker in a church. So, it was perfectly reasonable to laugh, and it was that fact, that the intentions one has are to always be recognized by a receiver, that led me to the use of chance operations and the renunciation of communication.

WILLIAMS: So, these works contained the seed of development for your later work with chance operations.

CAGE: Yes.

WILLIAMS: I'm curious as to why you chose to bring back a movement from the *Trio* of 1936 in *Amores*.

CAGE: That enabled me to write the work quickly. I had that movement and I had the idea for the work and it was three and there were three players.

WILLIAMS: It seems that the middle movements, the two percussion movements, have an almost organic quality in that you are using skin and pod rattle in one movement and wood sounds in another, and they contrast with the metallic sound of the prepared piano.

CAGE: Right.

WILLIAMS: Was this an intentional contrast?

CAGE: Yes.

WILLIAMS: And what relationship do they have to this Indian emotion?

CAGE: Well, one is male and one is female, and which is which I don't remember. Isn't that funny?

WILLIAMS: Well, maybe we have to decide!

CAGE: Offhand, I like the *Trio* best when it is played, not with a mallet, not with the ends of the sticks, but with the handles, so the woodblocks become extremely quiet, not brilliant, but almost inaudible.

WILLIAMS: You have specified that the woodblocks should not be the Chinese type. What kind of block do you have in mind?

CAGE: They happen to be woodblocks which were used for the backs of books. You remember, I told you that I worked with bookbinders during the day and we played percussion at night, so those woodblocks were part of the bookbinding.

WILLIAMS: About the *Imaginary Landscape No. 2*....

CAGE: This is a puzzle. Which is two and which is three? I wrote one piece which I wanted to get rid of, so the numbering in these pieces has become questionable.

WILLIAMS: This is the one with the tins and the buzzer. The rhythmic structure is 3—4—2—3—5, but there are not seventeen complete sections. Are you moving away from the square root structure by now?

CAGE: I began to eliminate certain portions of the structure as a kind of cadence, so it was "fiddling around" with the structure. It was not trying to get away from the structure, but trying to do something lively with it that would change its nature.

WILLIAMS: Was something like that also attempted in *Credo in US*?

CAGE: No, that followed the dance, but something like that took place in the *String Quartet* and in the *Concerto for Prepared Piano and Orchestra*.

WILLIAMS: Let me read to you a statement that Alfred Frankenstein made in 1939. He said, "One might almost say that the modern dance discovered the possibilities of the percussion battery for the western world...The modern percussion movement began with the reduction of dance accompaniment to simple, essential rhythms without melody." Is this statement correct?

CAGE: I think that happened in Germany first, not here. The dancer who had left the instruments in Seattle had a lot of percussion experience in Germany. They automatically accompanied their dance classes with percussion. Dancers frequently use one-sided drums or do something with

their fingers. Merce (Cunningham) still does that. He doesn't like poor piano accompaniment. They also distinguished themselves from the ballet, which always used piano. So they were always using percussion.

WILLIAMS: Since most of the players in your percussion ensemble were untrained, was technique a problem in performing these early percussion works?

CAGE: Oh, yes! We weren't trained percussionists. We could do anything in the way of counting, but we couldn't roll. That was the big impediment. Rolling requires training.

WILLIAMS: Did trained percussionists take an interest in this work?

CAGE: No. It was very hard to get anybody interested. The reason was, and still is, that harmony and tonality have a kind of stranglehold on music. And percussion is free of this. Of all the elements of the orchestra, the

strings, woodwind, brass and percussion, the only one of them that has an open mind is percussion. The rest have very fixed notions—and they're even trying, now, to have an effect on the percussion. If you go to a percussion concert now that presents all the directions that are being taken, I'm afraid that you'll find most directions are no longer free, and are no longer interested in sound, but are interested in the kinds of things that the strings and woodwinds and the brass are interested in: namely, expression, language, as if they were speaking, saying something — all the things that percussion never did. All percussion did before was to underlie the rhythm, or give some color, referring, say, to Spain or to Africa, to an orchestral work, or to be punctuation. It *could*, though, through its "open door policy," change music from language to sound. But, instead, a lot of

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percussion now is changing from sound to language. You could say that music could be divided into music that talks and music that doesn't talk. I prefer music that doesn't talk.

WILLIAMS: So, you don't think that the college or university percussion ensembles have done justice to the direction that you started in percussion?

CAGE: No, I don't mean to say that. I mean to say that the kind of music that I like is also being done, but what characterizes the whole music scene, not just the percussion scene, is what they call pluralism now—many directions rather than one direction. And a lot of directions being taken by percussion now have to do with expression and talking and, so to speak, being like other music. Don't you think that's true?

Jack Stamp: It's an effort to gain respectability, an attempt to go with the mainstream.

CAGE: Well, there is no mainstream now, or shouldn't be, and it's largely due to the spirit of percussion that there isn't. There's a big, open field to be explored, and I think I would connect electronics, computers, and so forth with the percussion section, certainly not with the string section. It fits into the percussion section—not into the brass, not into the woodwinds. It fits into the percussion. **PN**



B. Michael Williams is an Assistant Professor of music and Director of Percussion Studies at Winthrop University in Rock Hill, S.C. He is a frequent performer

with the Charlotte (N.C.) and Charleston (S.C.) symphony orchestras and is a founding member of the Tempus Percussion Quartet. He has formerly served as principal percussionist with the Brevard Music Center Festival Orchestra and the Lansing (MI) Symphony Orchestra, and section percussionist with the Civic Orchestra of Chicago. Dr.

Williams received his bachelor's degree from Furman University, master's degree from Northwestern University, and Ph.D. from Michigan State University. An active member of the Percussive Arts Society, he has twice held the position of president of the South Carolina chapter.

JOHN CAGE

JULY 2, 1940

List of Percussion Instruments

1 snare drum
2 bass drums
5 Chinese tom toms (black)
5 Chinese tom toms (small painted)
1 Japanese Noh drum
8 wood blocks
6 dragons' mouths
1 tortoise shell
1 pr. bones

1 pr. bongos
1 quijada
1 guiro
1 marimbula
4 pr. claves

4 pr. maracas
1 Indo-Chinese rattle
1 Indian rattle
1 sistrum
1 tambourine

2 pr. finger cymbals
1 pr. crash cymbals
1 Zildjian cymbal (Turkish)
4 Chinese cymbals
1 pr. jazz cymbals

5 gongs
1 tam tam
1 Chinese painted gong

3 Temple gongs with stands
5 Japanese cup gongs with stands
4 rice bowls
1 wind bell

1 string of oxen bells (13 bells)
1 set orchestral bells
8 cowbells (Sargent)

4 cowbells (old)
1 dinner bell
3 Mexican clay bells
1 trolling bell
1 small turkey bell
1 small Chinese bell (bronze)
3 sleigh bells (loose)

4 slide whistles
3 penny whistles
3 peedle pipes
1 conch shell
1 police whistle
Rosin and cloth
3 metal ash trays

2 pr. snare sticks
5 misc. snare sticks
1 bass drum beater
2 pr. timp. sticks (wood)
1 pr. timp. sticks (bamboo)
3 odd timp. sticks
2 pr. hard felt beaters
3 wire brushes
1 pr. cymbal beaters
3 pr. metal beaters
3 gong beaters
3 Chinese cloth beaters
1 odd hard felt beater (bamboo)
1 reg. triangle beater
3 metal sticks
1 leather beater
1 pr. hard rubber beaters (black)
1 " " " " (gray-green)
2 " " " " (red)
2 odd " " "
1 tam-tam beater
7 misc. wooden beaters
2 leather beaters (temple gongs)
3 small beaters (cup gongs)
9 chopsticks (not marked)
1 saw blade
1 hand saw
3 metal cylinders
2 forks
1 slap stick
1 bass drum foot pedal
1 metronome
1 snare stand (2 pieces)
1 jazz cymbal holder
3 standards
1 keyboard-length board (felt)
6 curtains

4 triangles
3 brake drums
8 strap irons
1 metal pipe
3 metal discs
10 thunder sheets
1 wash tub
1 lion's roar
1 xylophone
Misc. bottles and toy instruments
1 egg beater

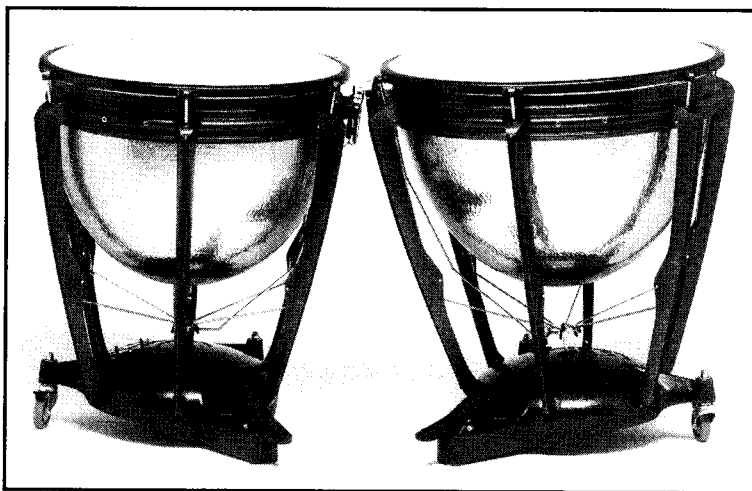
¹ Williams, B. Michael, *The Early Percussion Music of John Cage, 1935-1943*, UMI #9117879, Ann Arbor, 1990.

² Pritchard, James: From Choice to Chance, *Perspectives of New Music*, Vol 26, No. 1, Winter 1988.

**The typeset score now available from Peters is significantly different in regards to the radio/phonograph question than the composer's manuscript edition which they had previously published. Both versions include an instrument list which, for the fourth player, calls for "radio or phonograph," which could be interpreted to mean: "you'll need both." However, in Cage's manuscript it is quite clear what the original intention was: the first entrance—first sound of the piece—says "phonograph." Later, at the Second Progression, the score says "radio" for the first time. It is written on a different staff than the phonograph had been, and occurs in a context completely different from any other in the piece. When the original material returns (Third Facade), the notation returns to the staff used at the*

*beginning, where phonograph had been specified. Thus, anyone playing from the previously published composer manuscript facsimile would, of course, produce an ABA, phonograph/radio/phonograph form. I don't know how the change came into the typeset version, but it seems a shame to forgo the usage of the phonograph record. This is the first appearance in Western Art Music of the philosophical concept that a vinyl pressing of previously recorded music—say a Dvorak symphony, is **not** the Dvorak symphony, but simply one more mechanical sound resource; the theatrical prop used as sound source in First Construction, a thunder sheet, becomes a turntable a few years later. Besides, (as Cage also points out), it's hilarious.—Allen*
Otte, Assistant Editor

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